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**ATTACHMENT** F  
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July 6, 2005

Andy Miner  
Principal Planner  
City of Sunnyvale  
Community Development Department  
456 W. Olive Avenue  
Sunnyvale, CA 94088

**RE: 574 Bobolink Circle, Sunnyvale, CA**

Dear Mr. Miner:

I am writing this letter to provide you with a background on the project we are proposing for the address mentioned above, as well as our goals in designing this project. Furthermore, I am also taking this opportunity to address the several concerns raised by Staff and the Planning Commission at the Planning Commission Study Session of June 27, 2005.

**SUMMARY**

We are proposing to develop a 29,500 sq.ft. lot with four single family detached homes. The property is located on the southeast corner of Bobolink Circle and Bobwhite Avenue just east of Fremont Avenue. In designing this project, we reviewed 15 alternative lot configurations and accesses. After a careful consideration of the options, we selected the proposed design. We believe that this design is the most compatible with the surrounding lot configurations and home designs. In addition, it has the least impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

The Planning Commission and the Staff have expressed several concerns regarding the design of the project. These concerns and the responses are summarized below:

The size of the homes (Staff)	Although the proposed homes are larger than the average homes in the neighborhood, there are several houses in the immediate vicinity that have similar FARs (a list of addresses are provided further on Page 5 of this letter). The proposed homes meet the General Plan's Policy D4 - which encourages construction of the homes for large families
The circulation for the rear lots (Staff)	Our engineer has evaluated this concern and has determined that there is ample back up area for the cars. The Code requires 24 feet minimum - We propose 36 feet.
Reduce the number of lots from 4 to 3 (Planning Commission)	Reducing the number of lots will not change the lot configuration for this project. The lot designs and areas of the front units would remain the same. <i>Due to the significant cost of the land, this option would render this project not feasible to build.</i>
Impact on the oak tree on the adjacent property (Planning Commission)	An arborist has evaluated the oak tree and has recommended mitigation measures to reduce any impact on this tree. Only a small portion of the tree's canopy overhangs into our property. Alternative construction methods and tree protection plan will minimize any impact on the oak tree.
Providing single access to all of the parcels (Planning Commission)	This option will require L shaped buildings with the driveways abutting the front door. It is less desirable than the proposed project because it increases the amount of concrete adjacent to the front doors. In addition, the existing homes in this area are designed with their garages facing the street and have direct access from the street. The proposed driveways are similar to the existing clustered driveways in this subdivision.

Access from Bobwhite Avenue (Planning Commission)	We have evaluated this option. We believe that this option would isolate the flag lots (Attachment 1 - Options H and I). Furthermore, an access from the rear would require removal of the palm tree and will be too close to the oak tree.
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In conclusion we believe that the proposed design is the most compatible with the surrounding houses and is consistent with the City of Sunnyvale's General Plan Goals and Policies. We urge the staff and the Planning Commission to recommend the approval of our project to the City Council.

### **BACKGROUND**

The subject property is approximately 29,500 sq.ft. and is located in the R-0/S Zoning District. - this zoning district allows minimum lot sizes of 6,000 sq. ft. In 2002, the City Council adopted the Single Story Overlay Zoning District for this block of the neighborhood, which limits the homes to one story only.

This neighborhood was developed in 1950s and the design of the subdivision is typical of the 1950's development with ranch style architecture. The lot sizes on this block range from 6000 sq. ft. to 8000 sq.ft., and the size of the homes are between 1,560 sq. ft. to 3,190 sq.ft. There is a mixture of single story and two story homes in the neighborhood at large. The block south of Bobwhite and north, east and west of Bobolink Circle has been developed with single story homes - the houses on this block are limited to one story high.

We purchased this property in September of 2004. Between September 2004 and February 2005, we evaluated 15 different options (see Attachment 1) for developing this site. Since the area of the site is about 500 sq. ft. short of the required area for 5 lots, we considered including the adjacent home to the north (1313 Bobwhite Avenue) into our project to yield 6 parcels. The options we considered included four, five and six lots with alternative access from Bobolink circle and Bobwhite Avenue. After careful consideration of all of the options, we chose the design that is currently before the Planning Commission - which is to develop a 29,500 sq. ft. lot with four single family detached homes.

### **OUR GOALS**

As part of our design process, we took careful consideration of incorporating our following goals - which focus on the aesthetics of the neighborhood, the current economic needs and trends for larger homes, as well as the City requirements:

1. Design a project that has the minimum impact on the surrounding neighborhood;

2. The orientations of the parcels to be as similar to the existing lots as possible;
3. The homes to be oriented externally, toward the neighborhood, as well as internally, toward the homes in the rear;
4. The homes to be designed for large families, families who require an office at home, and/or families who live with their extended family members; and
5. The homes to be designed so they are compatible with the neighborhood and are economically feasible to build.

As the attached site plan (Attachment 2) shows, the project site is odd shaped. Because of this shape, we were not able to design the parcels with standard frontages on the abutting streets. We looked at several access alternatives including single access to all of the homes (Attachment 1). However, the majority of the single access options would result in homes that would be oriented internally toward the development with their sides or rear toward the neighborhood (Attachment, 1 options A through D, N and G). A few of the options include the option of having one or two homes facing the street with their back to the rear homes with no relations between them (Attachment 1, options H, I, J, and K).

In conclusion, we chose the proposed design because the front units face the adjacent street. The distance between the front units are 30 feet. We chose to eliminate the good neighbor fences along the sides of the front homes and landscape these areas creating a space that is open, inviting and relates to the rear units.

#### PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION CONCERNS

At the June 27, 2005 Planning Commission Study Session, the staff and the Commission raised several concerns:

1. The sizes of the homes are larger than the average homes in the neighborhood (staff).
2. It is unclear if the circulation for the rear units will work (Staff).
3. There is one too many lots in this development (Planning Commission).
4. There might be a potential impact on the mature oak tree located on the adjacent property (Planning Commission).
5. Access to all of the units should be provided by one driveway (Planning Commission).
6. There should be an access from Bobwhite Avenue (Planning Commission).

Below is our response to these concerns:

**1. Size of homes** - Our proposal consists of four single story single-family detached homes. Units 1 and 2 are approximately 2,795 sq. ft. and units 3 and 4 are 2,339 sq.

ft. of living areas. Lot 1 has the highest FAR which is at 45%, and lot 4 has the lowest FAR of 38%. Since the houses are one story, their lot coverage and their FAR are the same. The table below provides the development data for each unit.

	Lot Area	Living Area	Garage	Lot Coverage	Floor Area Ratio (FAR)
<b>Parcel 1</b>	7,225	2,795	457	45%	45%
<b>Parcel 2</b>	7,682	2,795	457	45%	45%
<b>Parcel 3</b>	7,161	2,339	430	38.6%	38.6%
<b>Parcel 4</b>	7,269	2,339	430	38%	38%

The planning staff has indicated that the sizes of the proposed homes are too large. They have cited that the average home in the neighborhood has about 1,800 sq. ft. of living area. *The proposed homes might be larger than other homes; however, the proposed lot sizes are larger than the average parcels (6,500 sq.ft.) in the area. In addition, there are several homes in the neighborhood that have similar FARs as our project.* Below is a list of homes in the neighborhood that are over 2,000 sq. ft. of living area that have FARs similar to our project:

ADDRESS	LIVING AREA	LOT AREA	FAR*
1342 Bobwhite Ave.	3,190	8,276	43.3%
1379 Bobolink Cir	2,344	6,098	44.9%
559 Bobolink Cir	2,149	7,840	32.5%
575 Bobolink Cir	2,172	7,405	34.7%
1406 Bobwhite Ave.	2,136	6,098	41.5%
1360 Bobwhite Ave.	2,137	6,098	41.6%
574 Carlisle Way	2,038	6,089	40.0%
570 Carlisle Way	2,295	6,089	44.2%
1362 Dunnock Way	2,050	5,662	43.2%

\* FARs are calculated by dividing the total floor area (living area plus 400 sq.ft. of garage) by the lot area.

In August 2002, the City Council adopted an ordinance increasing the allowable lot coverage for single story homes from 40% to 45%. In adopting this ordinance, the City Council recognized the need for more flexibility in design and floor area for single story homes. They also wished to encourage single story houses.

In the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's, the standard homes had three bedrooms, one or two baths and a great room which served as a living room and family room with an average size of 1,500 sq.ft.. However, in the recent years, the demographics and technology in the Bay Area have changed. As the result, the housing needs for families have changed requiring more rooms. Below are the reasons for the change in housing needs:

- Families have more children;
- Both parents in the family work and require an office at home;
- With the age of the Internet, more people work at home (telecommute) and require an office at home;
- The City of Sunnyvale demographics have changed within the past few years - there are more families who live with their extended family members and require extra bedrooms.

The housing need for large families has been addressed in the City of Sunnyvale "Housing and Community Revitalization Element Policy D.3". This policy states, **"Encourage the construction of units that meet the needs of large families."** We believe that this is a great opportunity to provide the additional housing for the Sunnyvale residents with large families without creating a cluttered development.

This project has balanced the needs for larger homes and the compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood. We have controlled the masses of the building and have provided ample distance between the proposed homes and the existing residences. As the site plan shows (Attachment 2), there are four homes within this project. Units 1 and 2 face Bobolink Circle and have their own driveway accesses. Units 3 and 4 are located in the rear and share an 18-foot driveway. Unit 1 and 2 are 30 feet away from each other, existing homes and the house located in the rear. Units 3 and 4 are barely visible from the street and are about 30 feet away from the adjacent homes. In contrast, the existing houses in the neighborhood are about an average 12 feet apart, which is significantly less than the proposed project.

A typical lot in this neighborhood has a 62-foot wide frontage with 100 feet of depth. The houses are about 48 feet wide at the front setback with the garages facing the street. The proposed front units have a frontage of 73 feet. The widths of the buildings are 33 feet at the front setback line and gradually increase to 55 feet at 30 feet away from the front property line. As the result, the proposed homes are compatible in shape and mass with the existing homes, even though the sizes of the homes are larger than the surrounding houses.

Finally, only the lot coverage for Unit One is at maximum allowable of 45%. The rest of the units are well below the allowable lot coverage. The homeowners in the neighborhood could increase the size of their home to the 45% maximum allowable lot coverage for one story and to 50% FAR for two story homes without a review by the Planning Commission. Reducing the size of these homes will put this project at a disadvantage in comparison with the surrounding homes.

**2. Circulations for the rear parcels:** The Planning Staff has expressed concerns regarding the back up area for the rear units. Our civil engineer has evaluated the circulation for the rear lots and has indicated that there are ample areas for the cars

to maneuver and/or turn around. This fact is based on that the garages are located 72 feet apart. This distance allows for 18-foot deep driveways as well as a 36-foot back up area, which exceeds the minimum area required by the Code. Please note that the Sunnyvale Zoning Ordinance requires a minimum of 24 feet back up area.

**3. Three lot development:** A Planning Commission member indicated that there should be three lots in this development. We have evaluated this option and concluded that reducing the number of lots will not change the lot configurations. Because of the shape of the property, there would still be a flag lot in the rear and the size of the front lots would not change. In addition, the cost of land is high in the City. Reducing the number of lots to three would make this project economically not feasible.

**4. Impact on the oak tree:** There is an existing mature oak tree on the adjacent property. As the attached picture (Attachment 3) shows a small portion of the tree canopy overhangs over the existing asphalt driveway. An arborist has evaluated the condition of the tree and has made a recommendation that we use the alternative pier and grate beam foundation to minimize any impact on the root system. The pier and grate beam foundation is a common construction method used when the houses are located within the drip line of the trees to prevent damaging the trees' fine root system. In addition, we will implement tree protection measures recommended by the arborist in his report. Finally, we believe that removing the existing driveway and replacing it with a house would reduce the impact on the tree. Once the existing driveway is removed and the house complete, cars and trucks would no longer drive over the root system.

**5. Single access drive:** In order to provide a single access driveway to this development, the front units will have to have a side loading garages facing each other (Attachment 4). This alternative has several disadvantages:

- a. The front units will be L shaped with the garage set back from the access driveway to accommodate the garages, the driveways and a back up area for cars. The L shaped buildings will have concrete driveways abutting the front doors.
- b. The configuration of the homes would be different from the existing houses in the neighborhood. The existing homes and their garages face the adjacent streets and have direct driveway access from the streets (Attachment 5).

We believe that the proposed design is more compatible with the neighborhood. Two of the driveways are clustered together similar to the existing driveways. In addition, L-shaped buildings result in significant concrete area. We have utilized this design for the rear unit because there is not a better design option to accommodate the garages, driveways and ample back up area. The proposed design with individual driveways will minimize the required concrete and better distribute the landscaping in the front yard.

**6. Access from Bobwhite Avenue:** We have looked at providing access from Bobwhite Avenue (Attachment 1 options H & I). However, we felt that this option would isolate the units in the rear and would require removing the existing mature palm tree.

### **CONCLUSION**

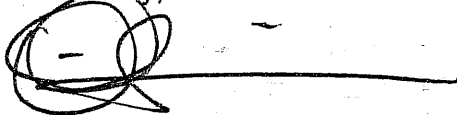
In designing this project, we evaluated several alternatives. Among these options, we found that the proposed design is the most compatible with the neighborhood and has the least impact on the surrounding area.

Our goal is to develop a project that accommodates the residents of Sunnyvale who have large families. This goal is consistent with the City's Housing and Revitalization Element Goal D - which encourages construction homes for large families. As it has been stated, the sizes of the proposed homes are larger than the average house on this block. However, there are several homes in the neighborhood that are similar in size and have similar FARs.

We believe that the proposed project is compatible with the neighborhood, and is consistent with the goals and policies of the City of Sunnyvale's General Plan. We urge the staff and the Planning Commission to recommend approval of this project to the City Council.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 408-666-6556.

Sincerely;



Omid Shakeri  
Chief Operations Officer

### **Attachments:**

1. Alternative Lot Configurations
2. Site Plan
3. Picture of the Oak Tree
4. Single Access Conceptual Plan
5. Pictures of the homes in the neighborhood



1"=60'

TBS

9-9-04

# OPTION A

ARRAN ATTACHMENT F

CT.

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BLDG ENVELOPE

2-50'x35' = 1750 SF

1-20'x80' = 1600 SF

3-

4-

5-70'x38' = 2660 SF

GROSS 20,250

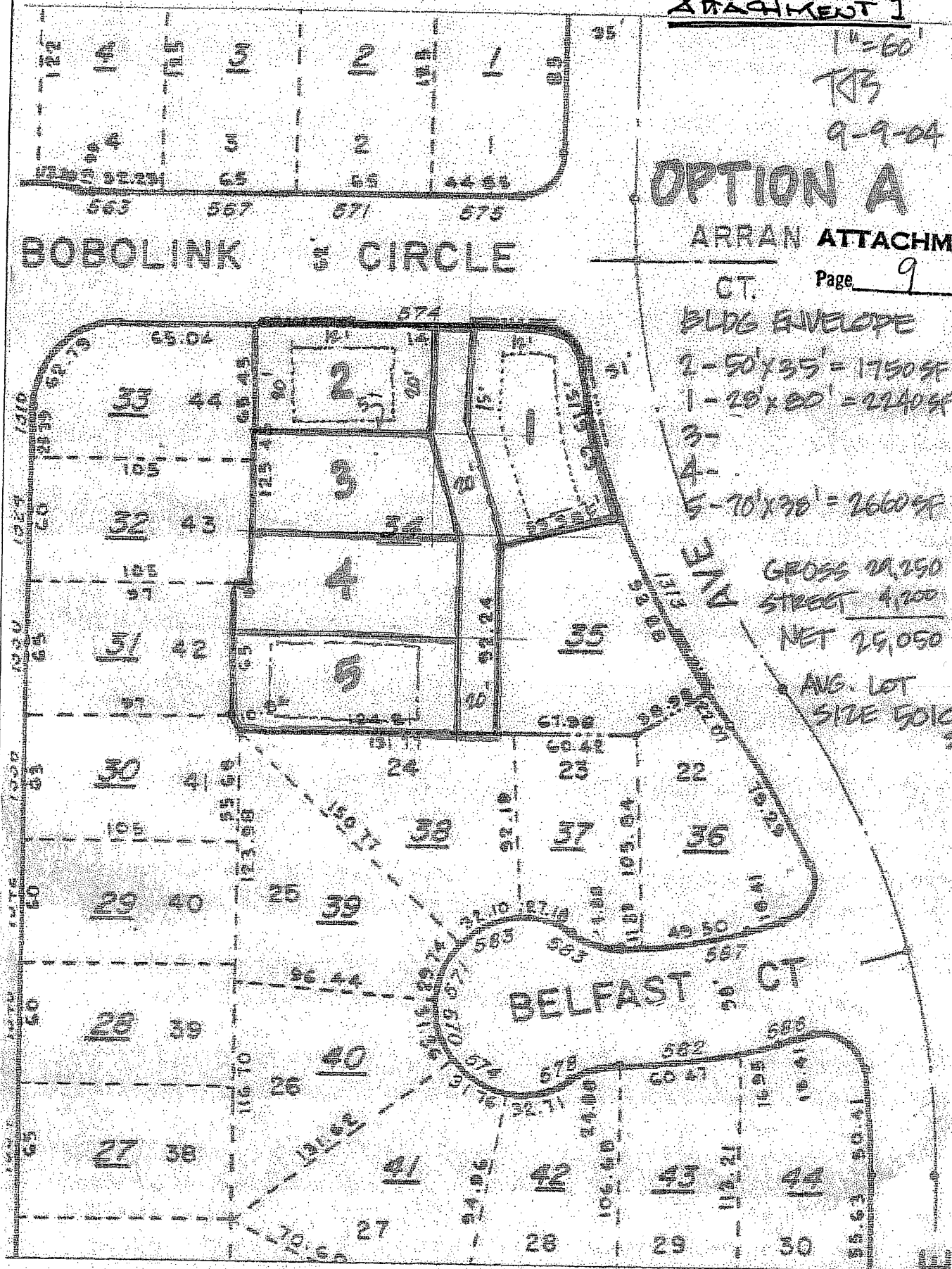
STREET 4,200

NET 25,050

AVG. LOT  
SIZE 5010  
SF

BOBOLINK & CIRCLE

BELFAST CT



1<sup>st</sup> = 60'  
TRZ  
9-9-04

# OPTION 2

POBOLK 62 CIRCLE

APR 1964

ATTACHMENT

CT

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$$175 \times 26 = 4550$$
$$40 \times 5 = 200$$

4x5 = 20

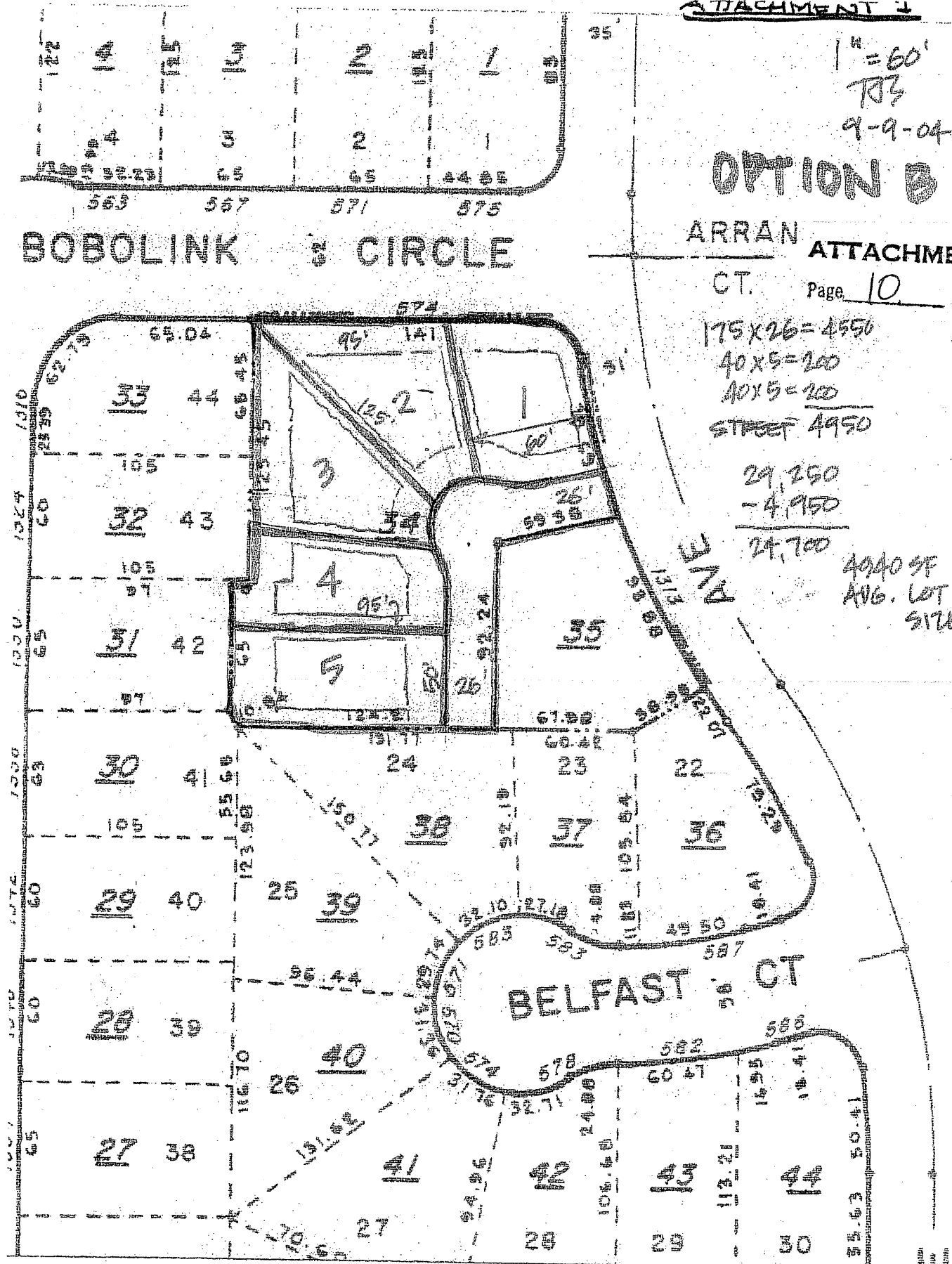
STREET 4950

2090

1490

2700

4940 SF  
Ave. Lot  
517E



1"=60'

T83

9-9-04

OPTION C

BOBOLINK : CIRCLE

ARRAN  
CT.

ATTACHMENT F  
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STREET

30X125 = 3750

30X75 = 2250

6000 SF

GROSS 19,250

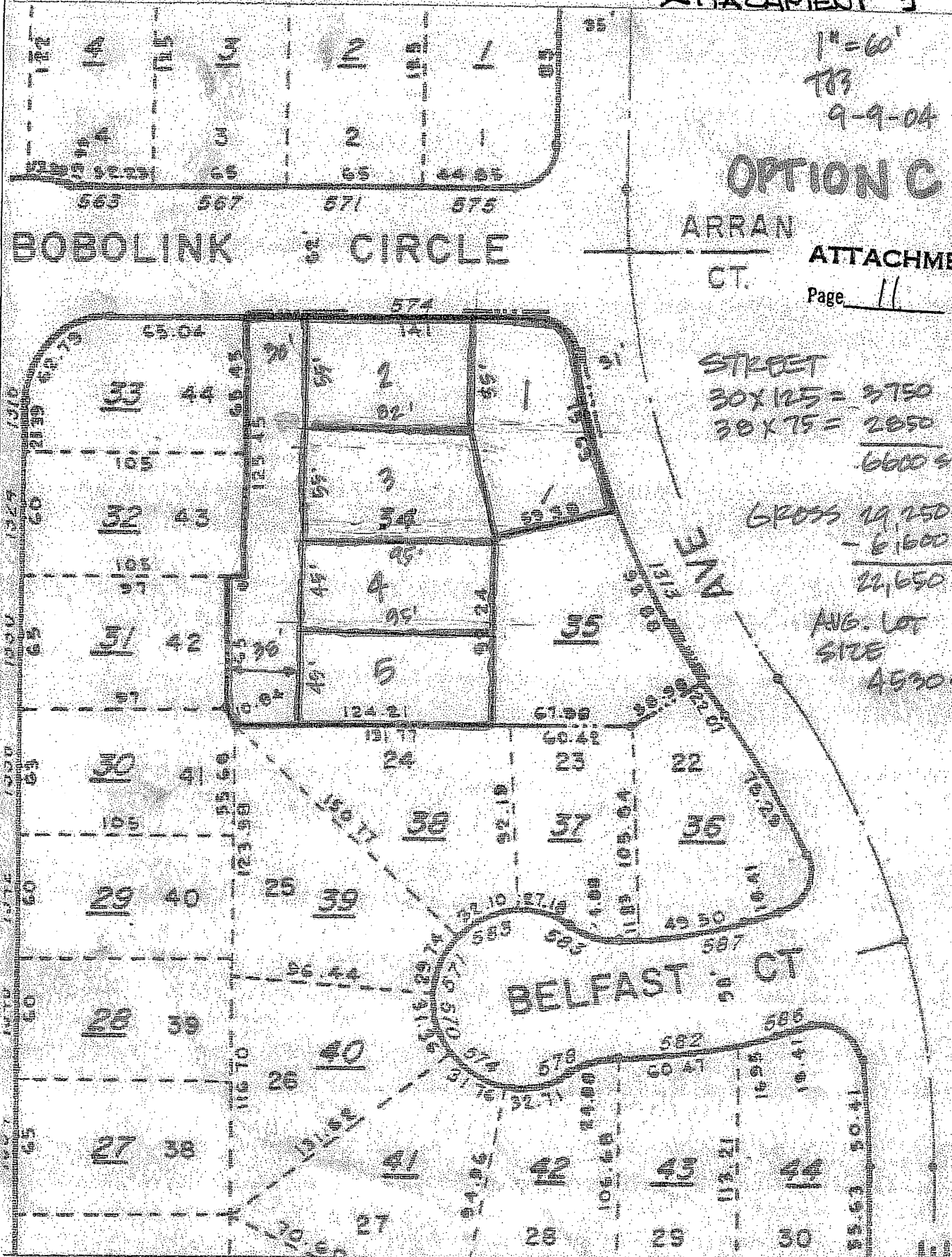
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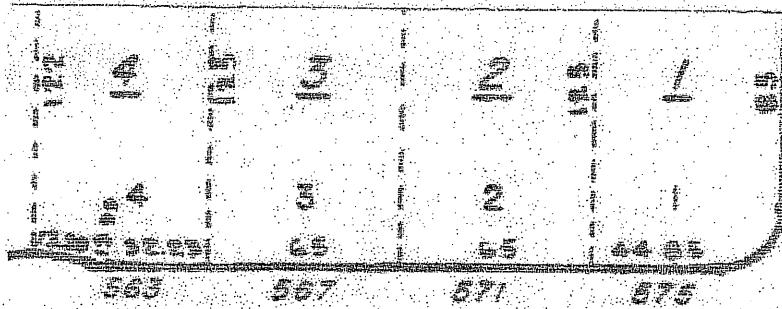
22,650

AVG. LOT  
SIZE

4530 SF

BELFAST : CT





BOBOLINK CIRCLE

OPTION D

ARRAN CT. ATTACHMENT F

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GROSS 29,250

STREET 3,800

NET 25,450

AVG. LOT SIZE

5000 SF

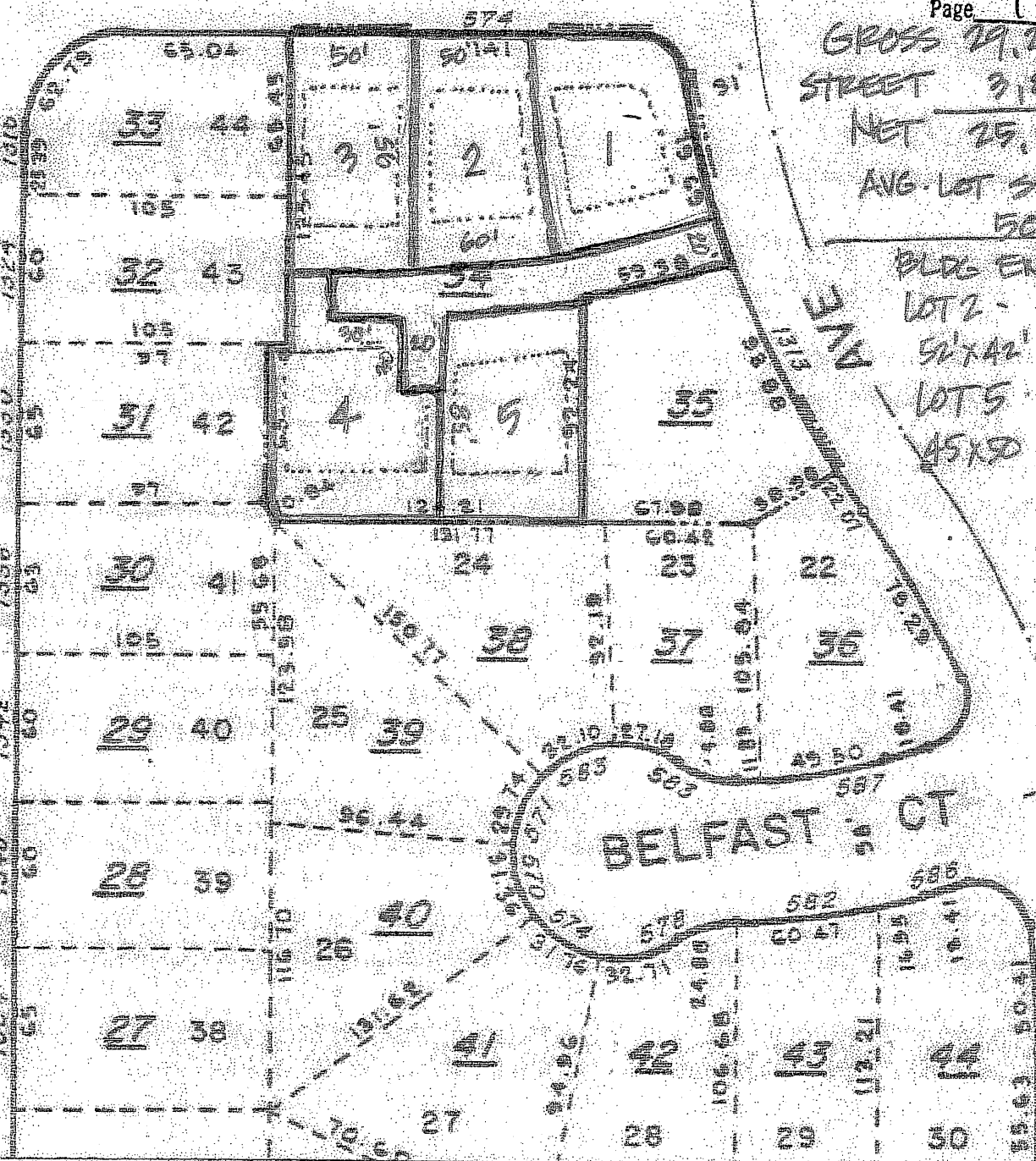
BLDG ENVELOPE

LOT 2 -

50' x 42' = 2100 SF

LOT 5 -

45' x 50' = 2250 SF



ATTACHMENT 1

Option E

ATTACHMENT F  
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NONE

ATTACHMENT 1

OPTION F

ATTACHMENT F  
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NONE

OPTION

1" - 60' G

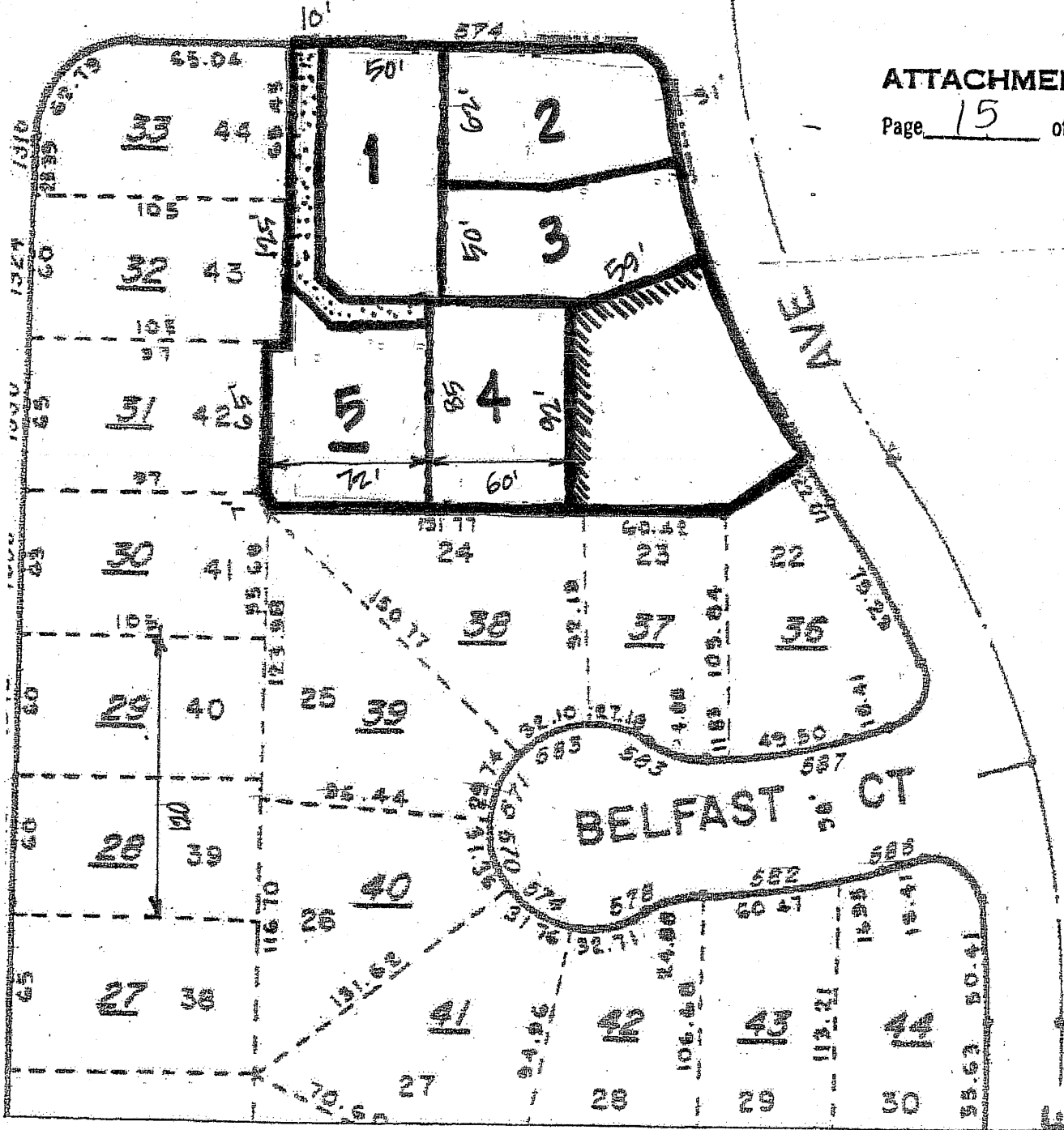
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11-3-04

BOBOLINK CIRCLE

ATTACHMENT F

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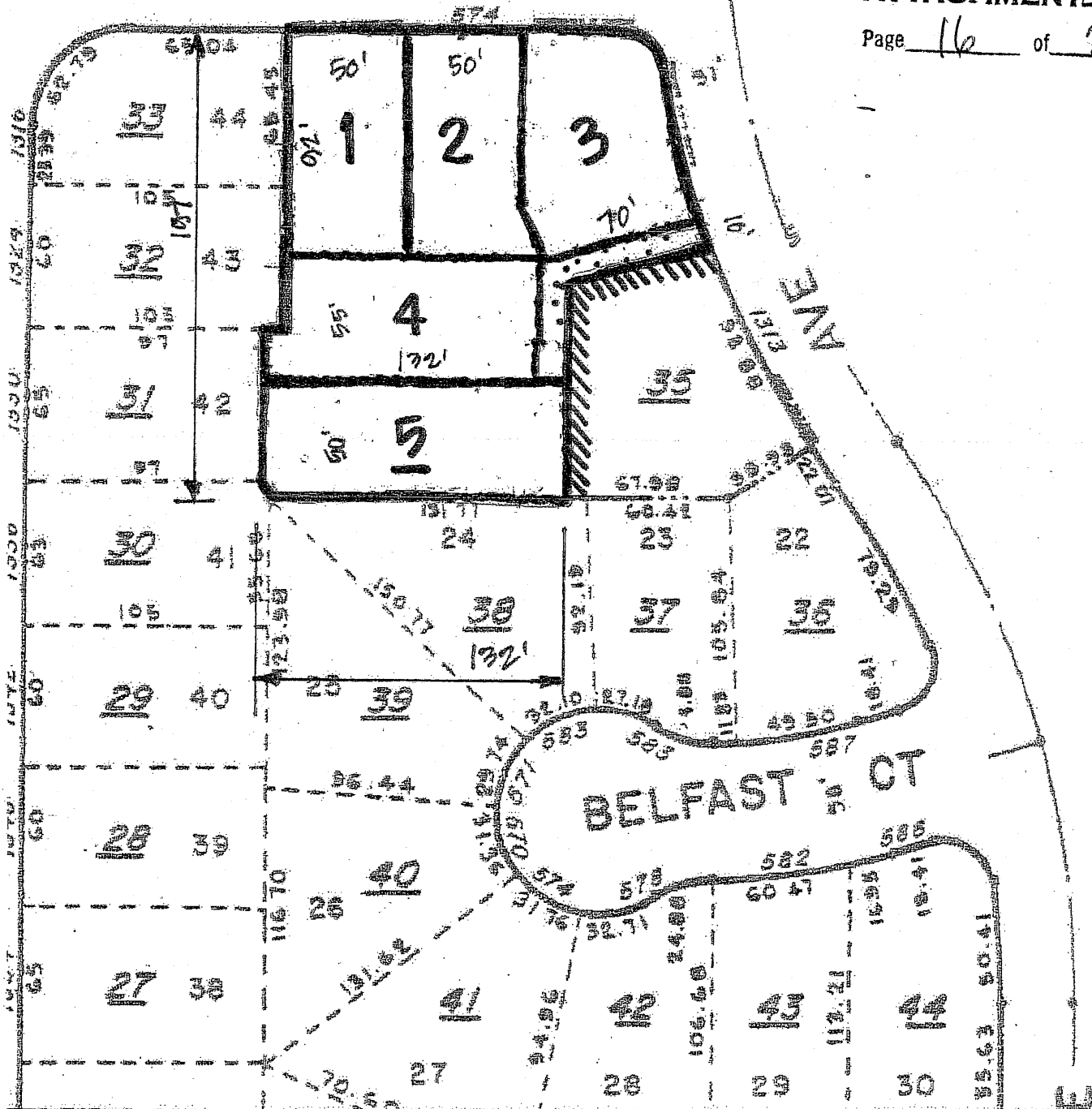


# ATTACHMENT 1 OPTION

1" = 60' H  
TBS 11-3-04

ATTACHMENT F  
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BOBOLINK 3 CIRCLE





# OPTION

1" = 60'

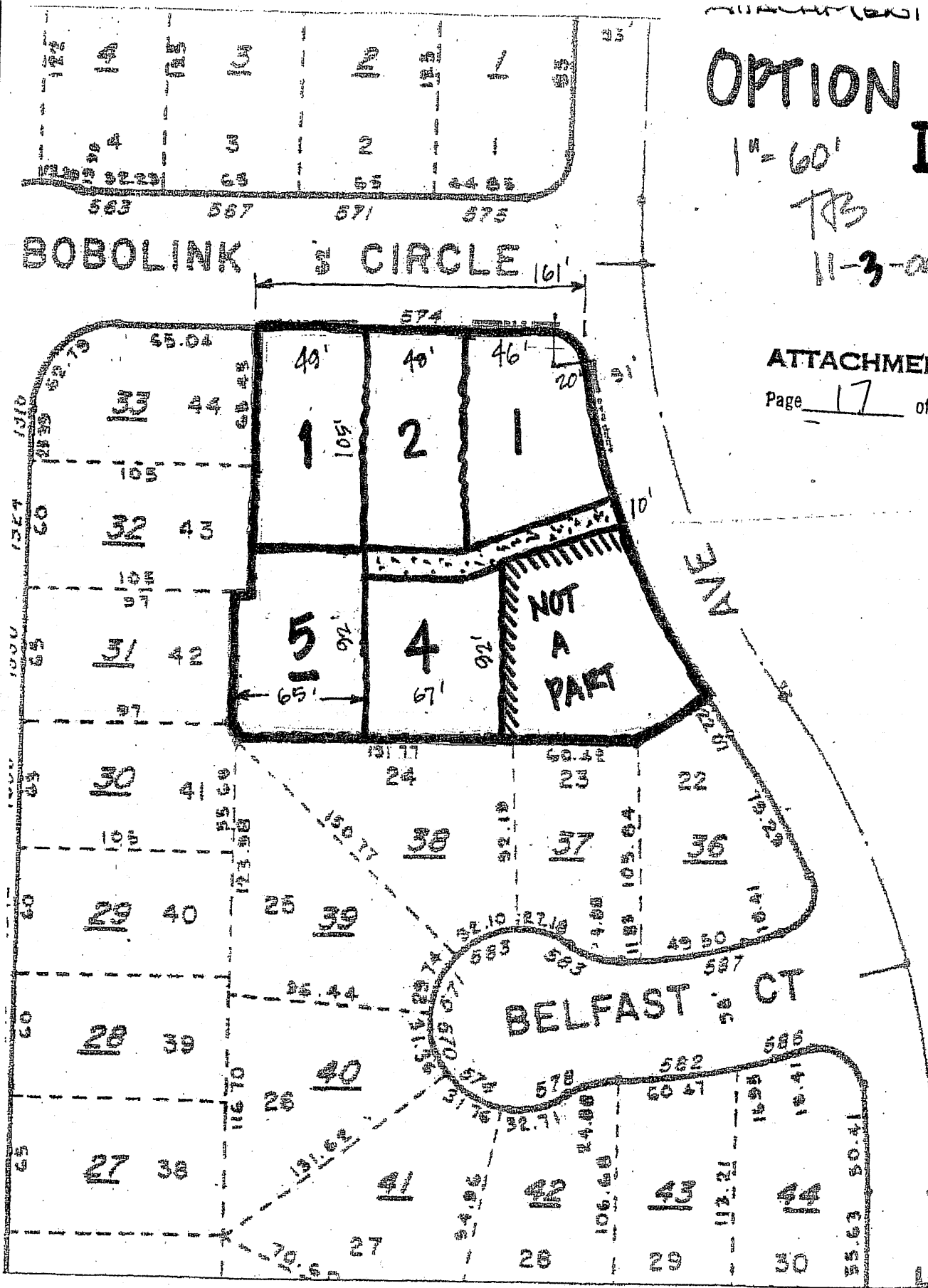
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TBS

11-3-04

ATTACHMENT F

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# OPTION

1" = 60'

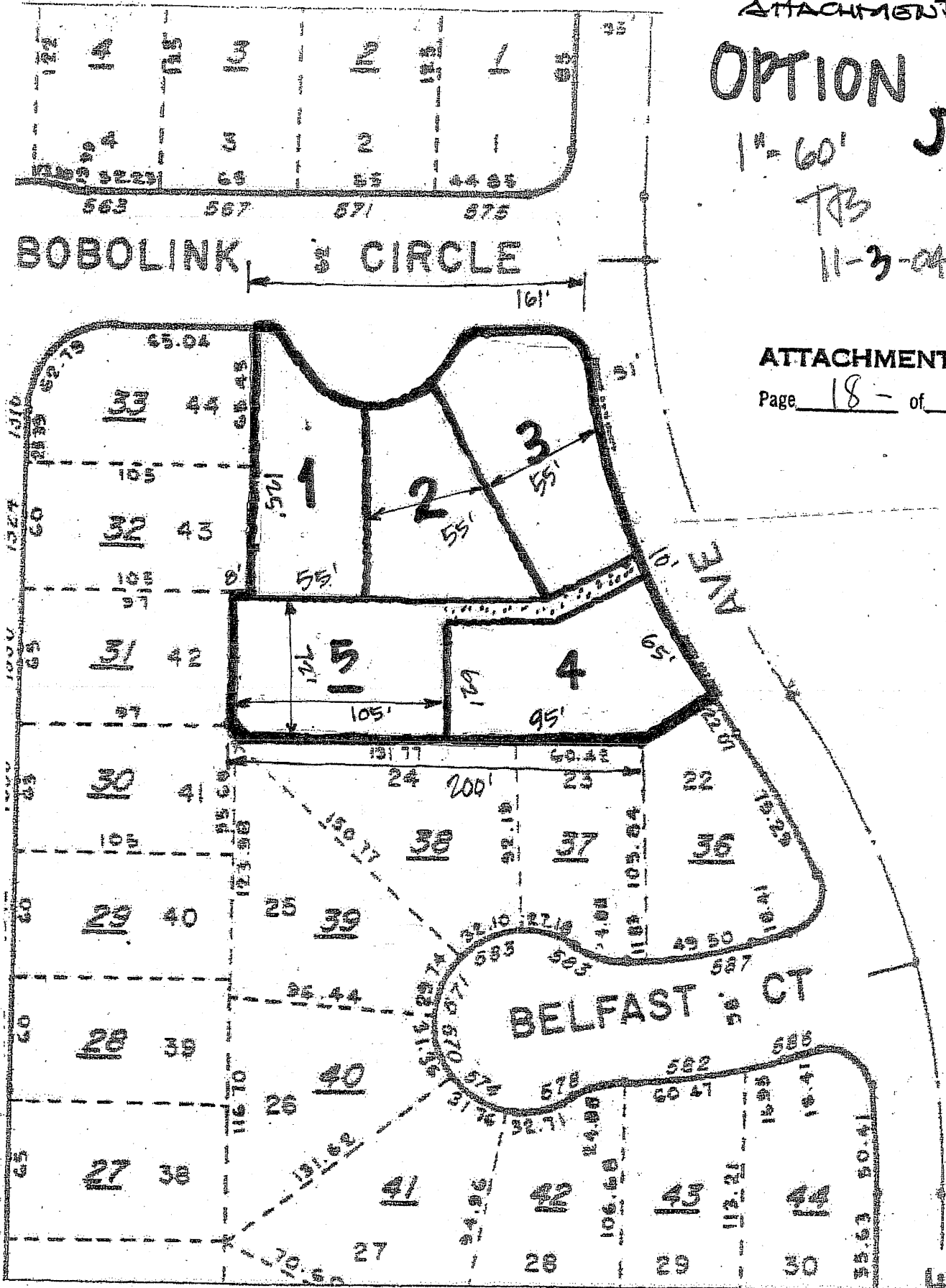
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TBS

11-3-04

ATTACHMENT F

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OPTION

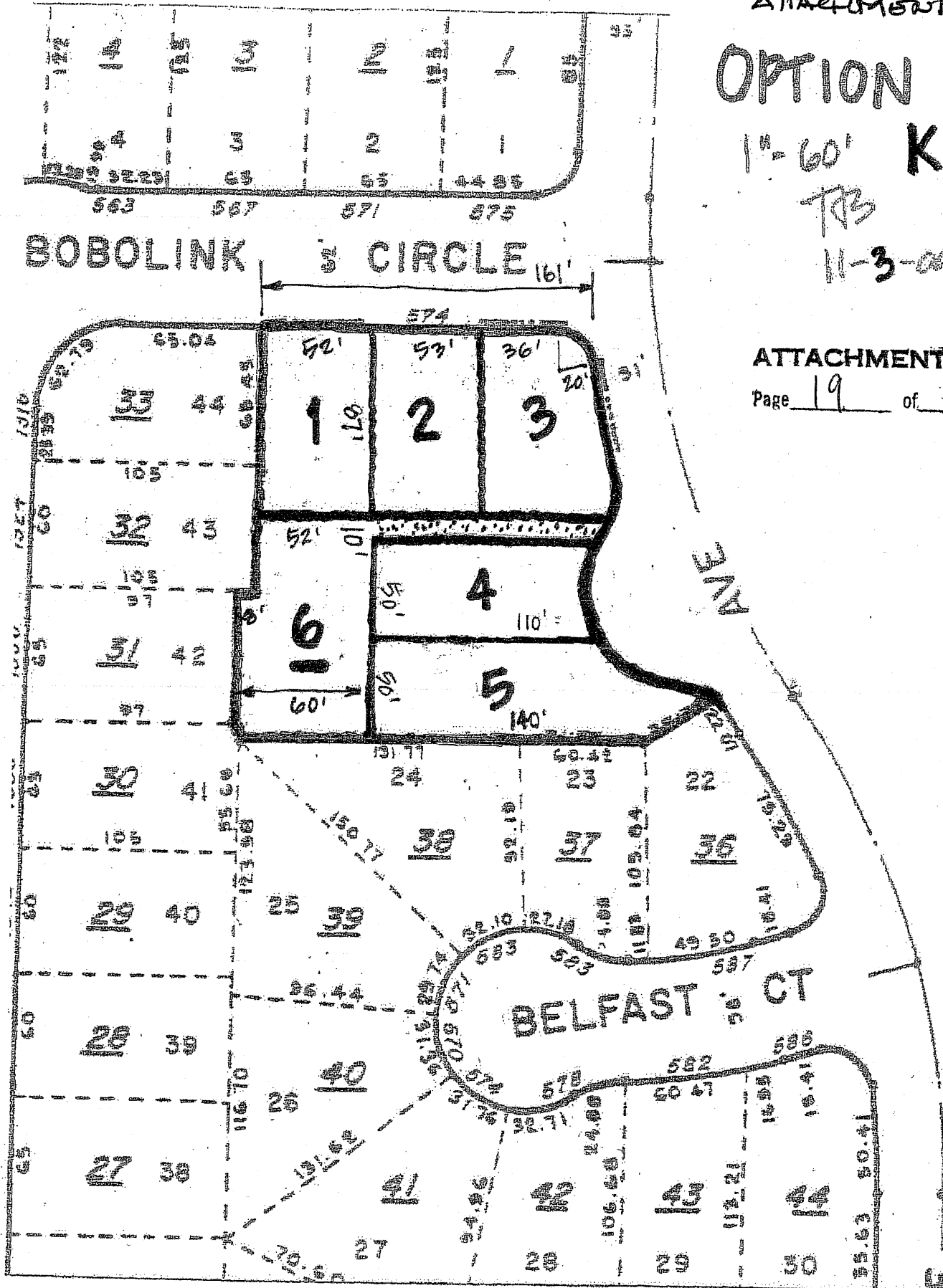
1" = 60' K

T/B

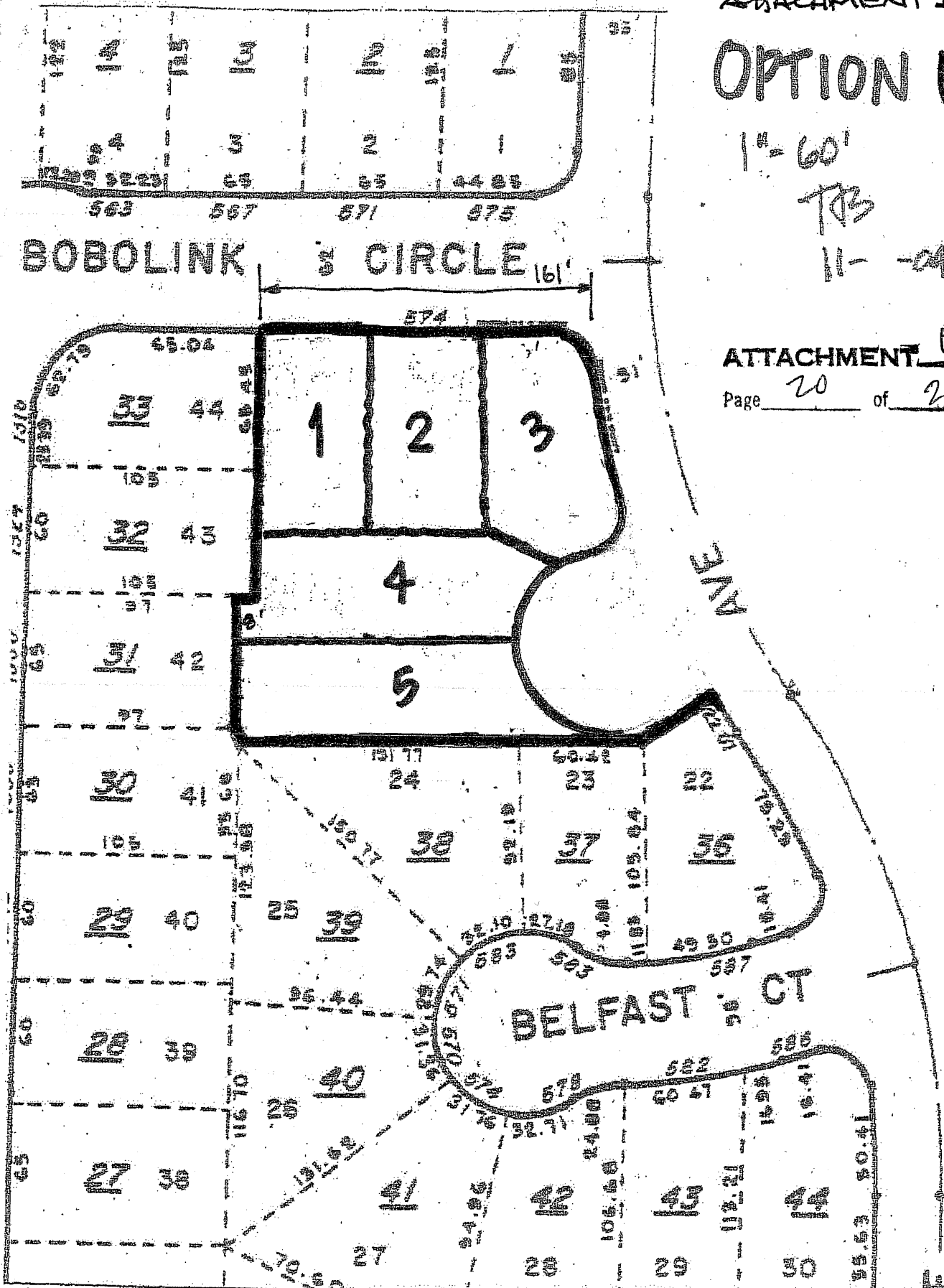
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ATTACHMENT F

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# OPTION M

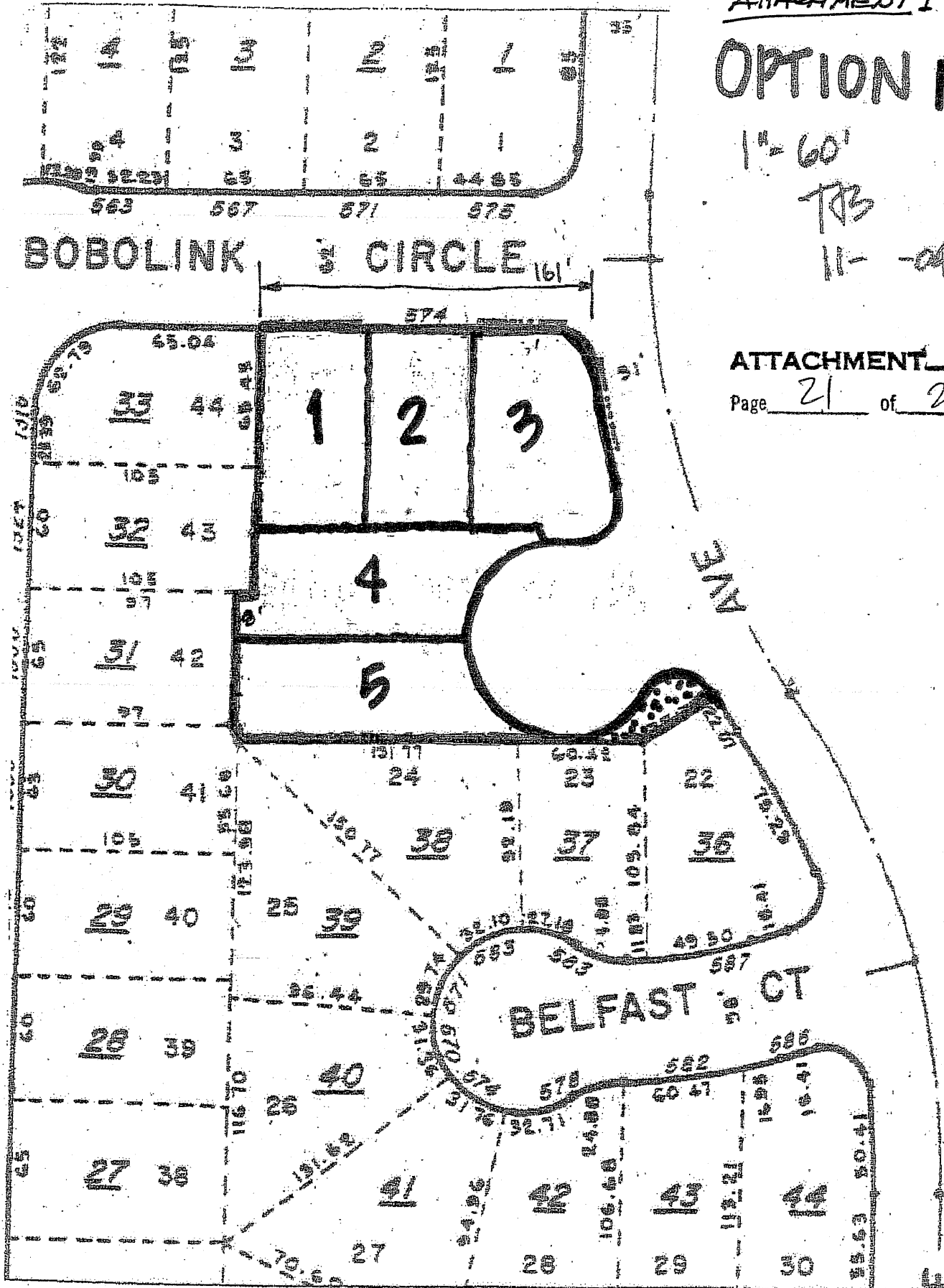
1" = 60'

T/B

11-04

ATTACHMENT F

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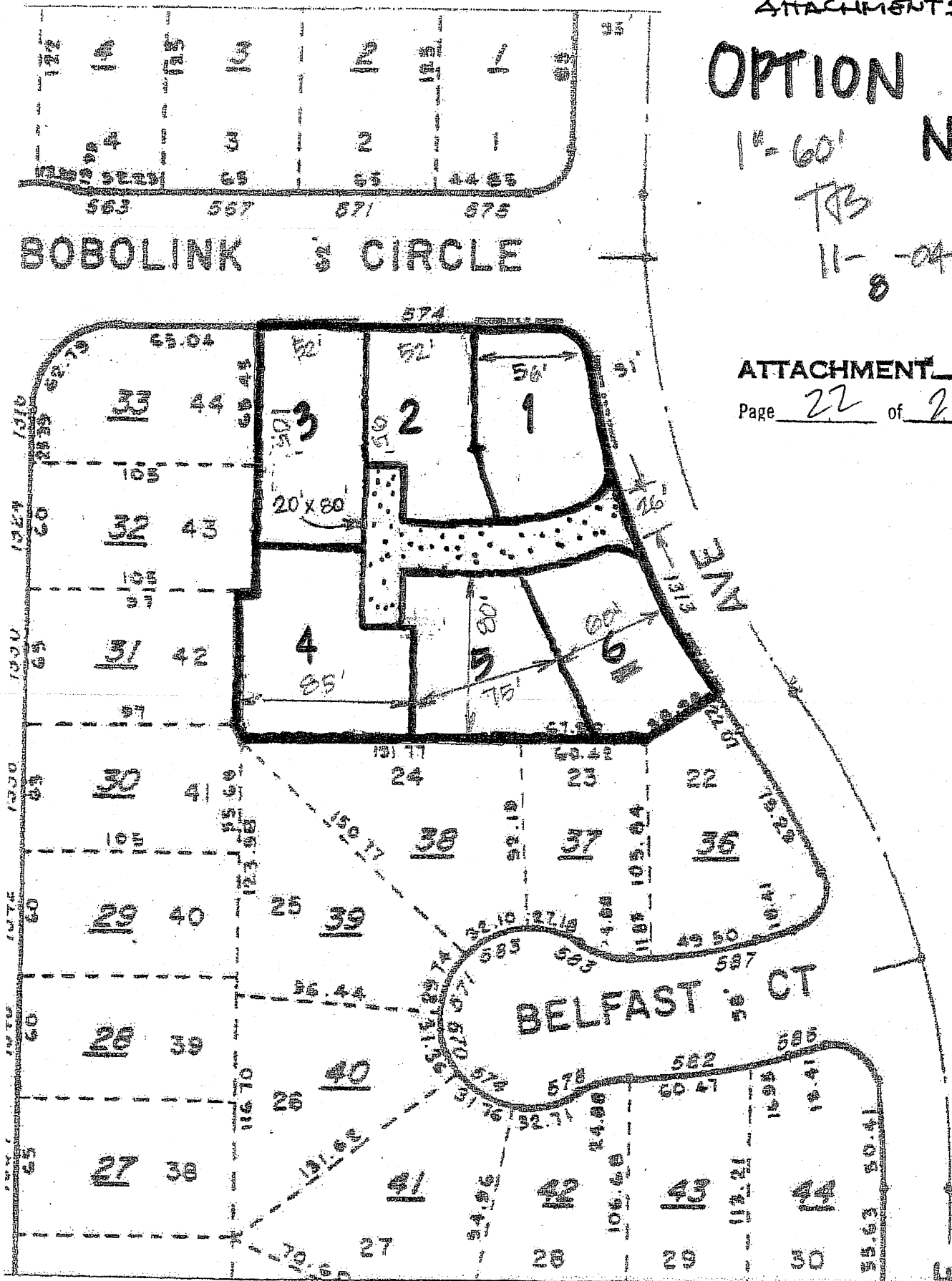
1-60-N

73

11-8-04

ATTACHMENT F

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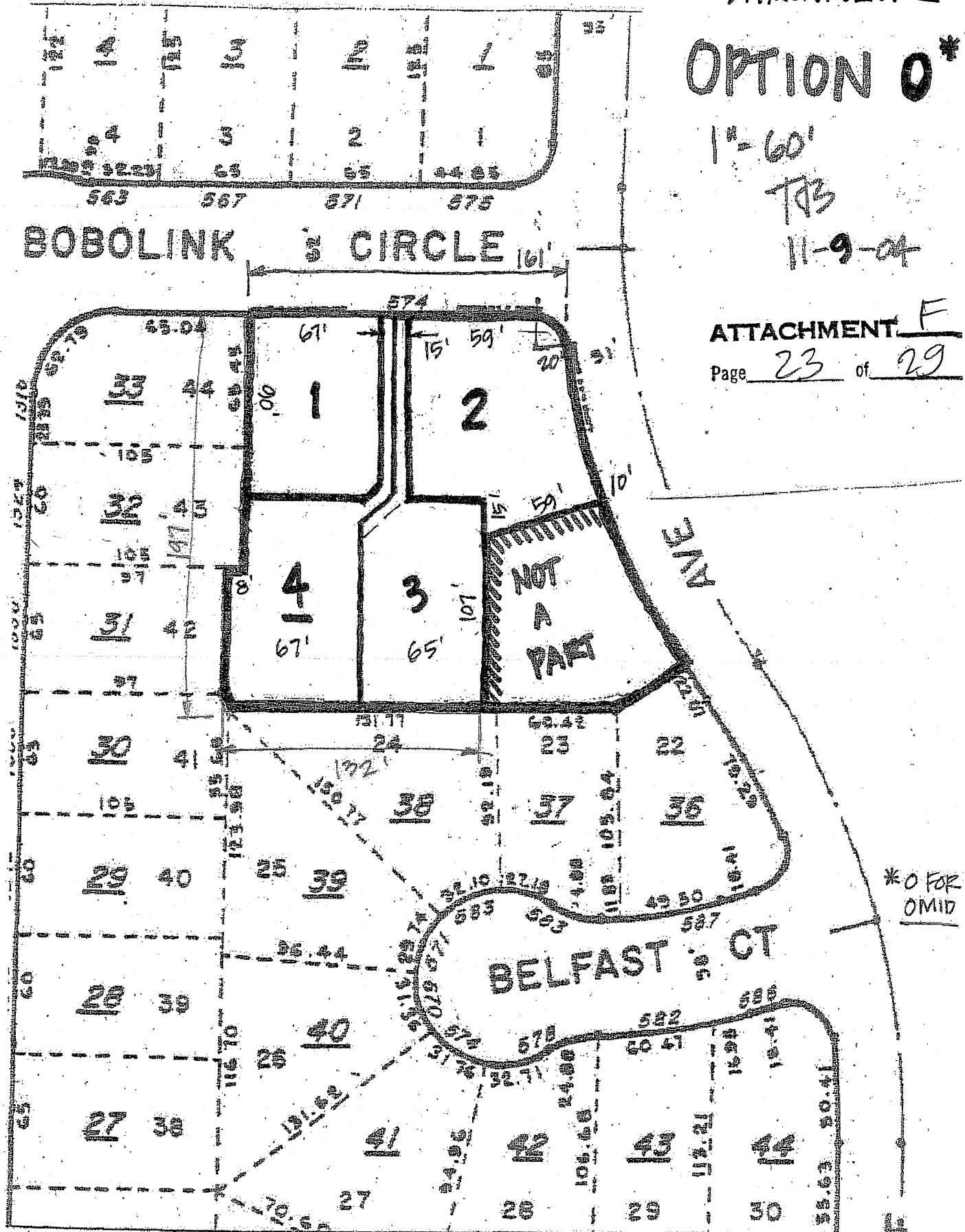
1-60

12

11-9-04

ATTACHMENT F

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# OPTION P

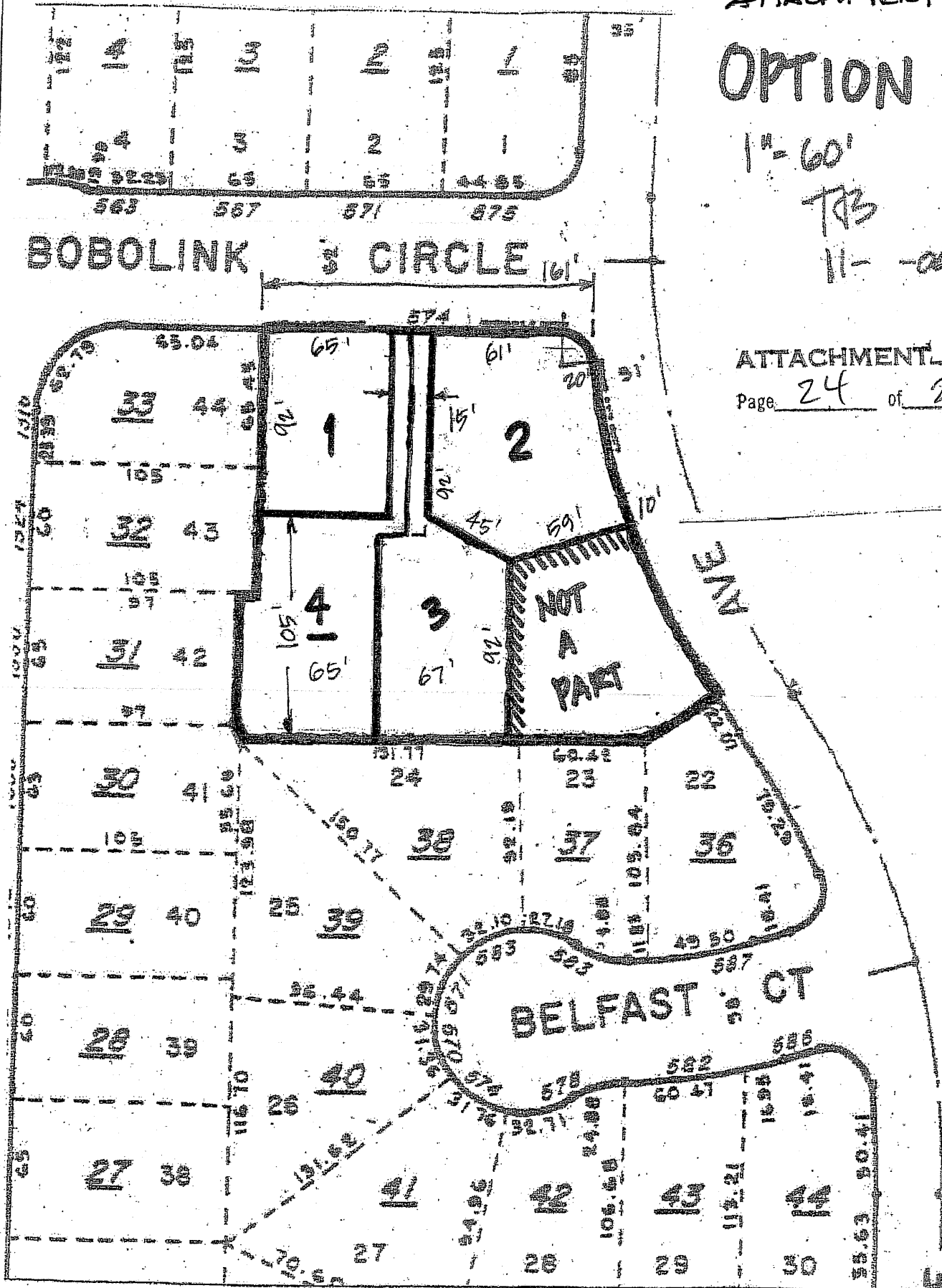
1" = 60'

T/B

11-04

ATTACHMENT F

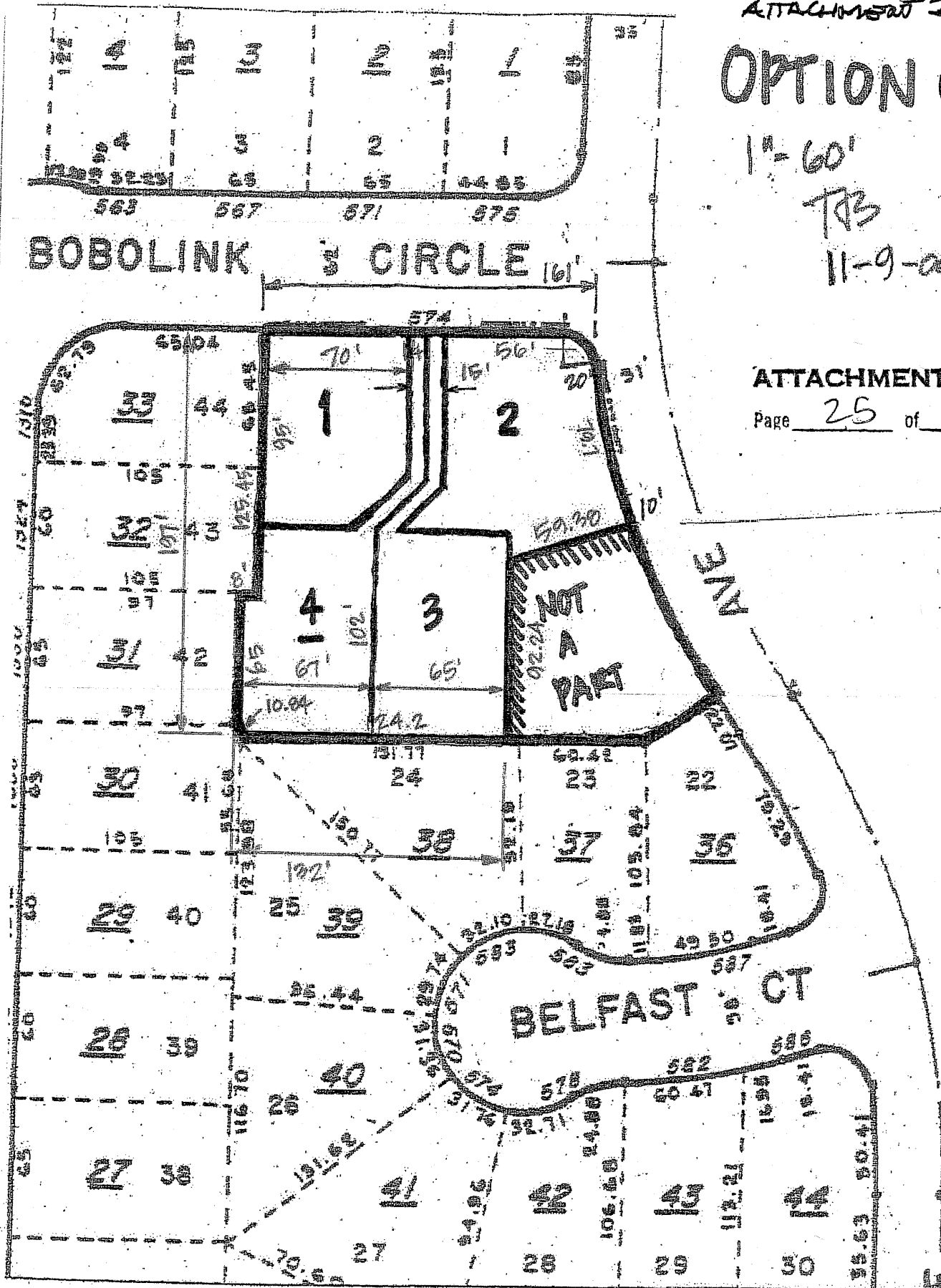
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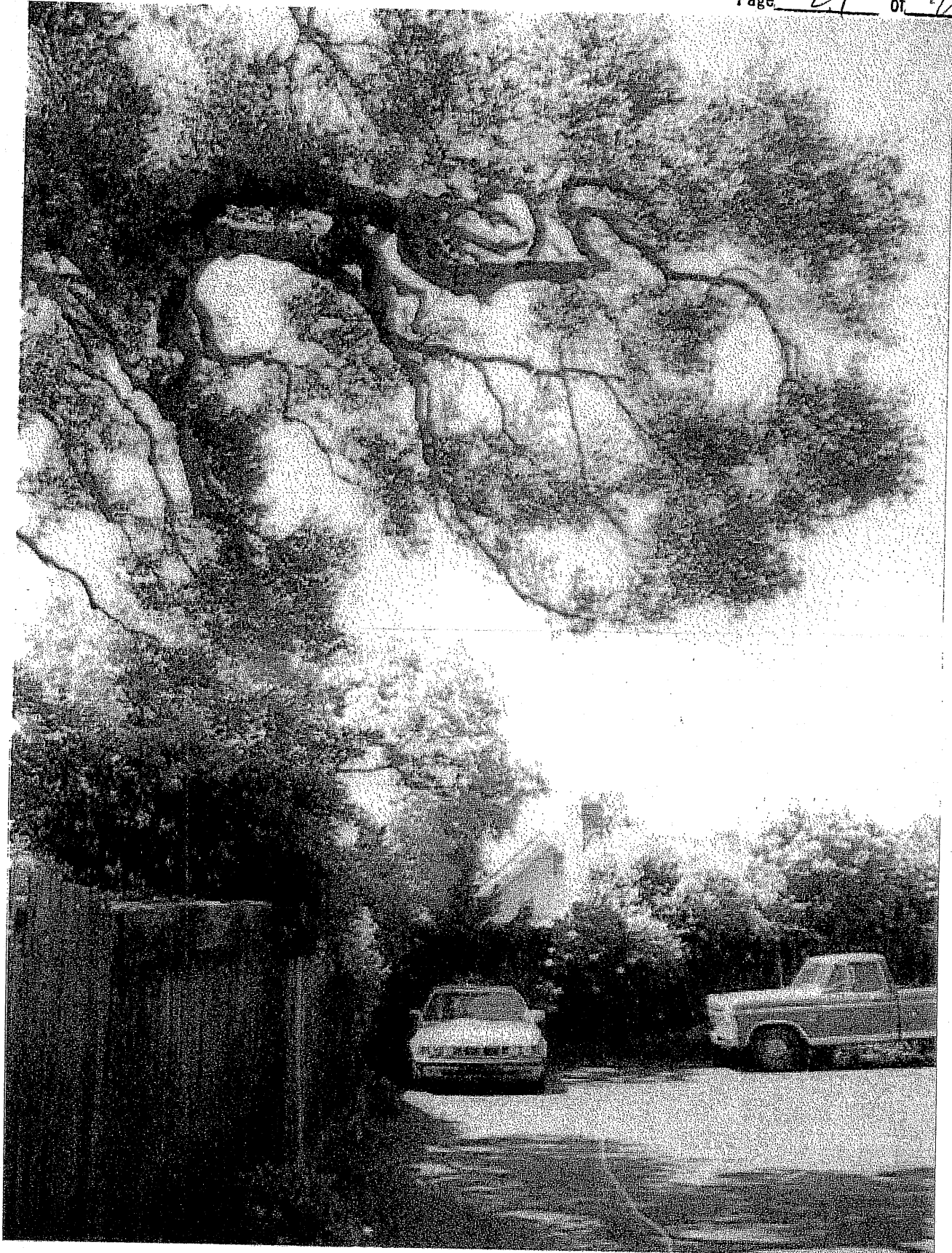
11-9-04

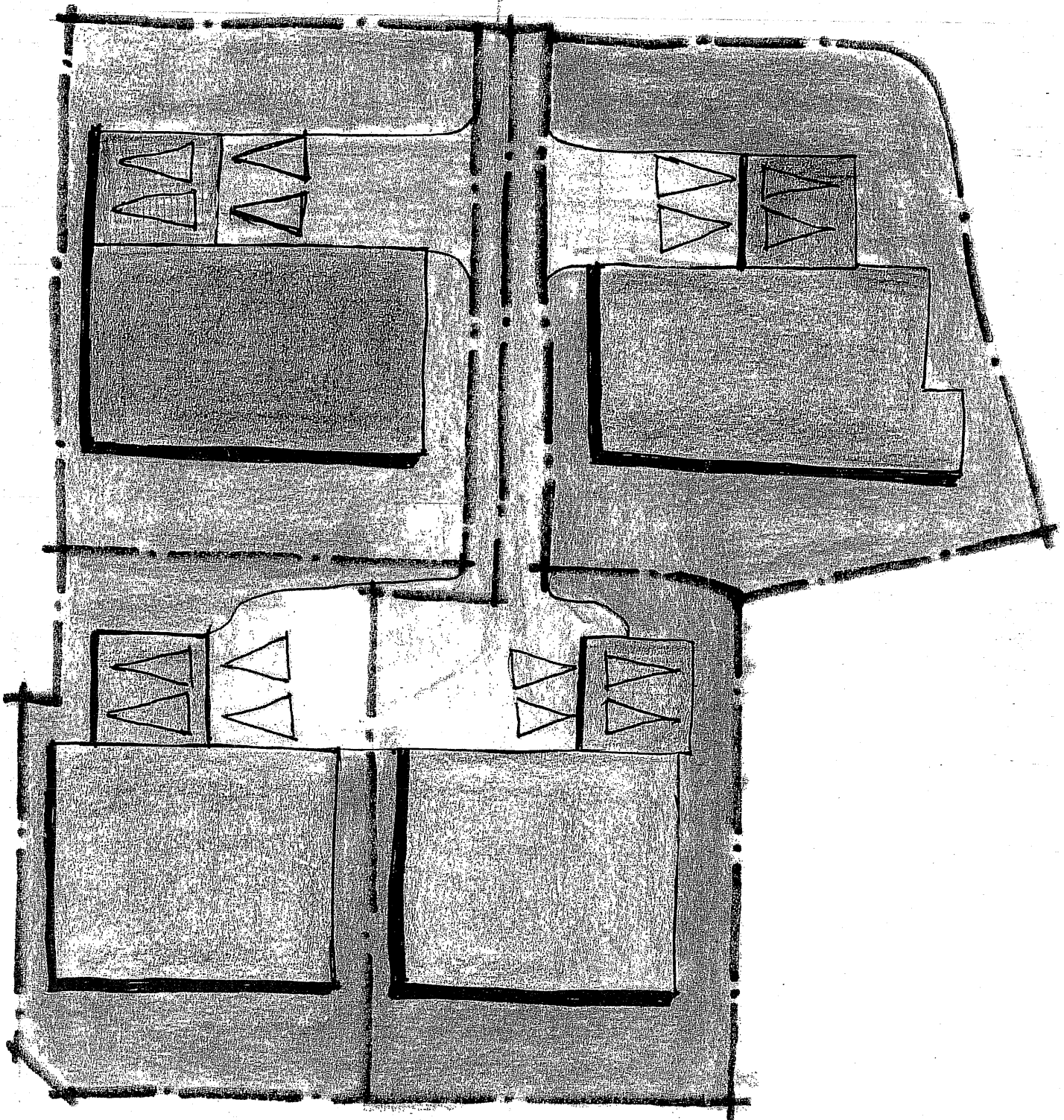
ATTACHMENT F  
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SINGLE ACCESS



F 29

